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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8059  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 4832  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE 1936  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE 1944  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 1570  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 1203  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 0785  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 0834  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0969  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0785  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0879  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PESHAWAR 000131

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: MILITARY ACTION IN FR BANNU: OPENING MOVE FOR WAZIRISTAN?

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne Tracy, Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate  
Peshawar, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A Pakistani military operation in Frontier Region Bannu, on the border of North Waziristan Agency (NWA), has resulted in over two hundred deaths and significant displacement. The operation, launched two weeks after the kidnapping of 120 students and staff from Razmak Cadet College (ref tel), targets the tribes in whose area the kidnapping took place. In the area, however, it is seen as an opening move in the expected Pakistani military campaign in the Mehsud areas of South Waziristan Agency (SWA), and its internally displaced people (IDPs) are seen as the first of many and as a major security risk by authorities in settled areas to their east. End summary.

FR Bannu Operation: Response to Kidnapping?

¶2. (SBU) After moving reinforcements into the area on June 7-8, the Pakistani military began bombardment of areas of F.R. Bannu, occupied by the Jani Khel and Bakka Khel sub-tribes of the Wazir, on the evening of June 9. Beginning June 10, Pakistani ground forces began sweeps into these areas, arresting suspects and engaging in combat where they met with resistance. To date, well over 150 people have been reported killed in the operation in F.R. Bannu, more than 140 buildings destroyed, and more than thirty suspects arrested. Most of the force employed so far has been in the Jani Khel area. The Bakka Khels, who as of June 15 had formed a peace jirga and were negotiating with the government for the surrender of militants in their area, have not experienced as much fighting. As of June 15, the military was beginning operations into the areas dominated by the Gorbaz tribe, to the west of the Jani Khel along the road from Bannu to Miram Shah. The military has not yet reported any casualties in the operation in F.R. Bannu.

¶3. (C) The operation in F.R. Bannu began after the expiration of a deadline given by the NWA Political Agent (whose writ extends to F.R. Bannu) for surrender by the Bakka Khel and Jani Khel tribes of militants involved in the June 1 kidnapping of 120 students and staff from NWA's Razmak Cadet College (ref A). The kidnapping, which took place on a portion of the Miram Shah-Bannu road dominated by the Bakka Khel, has never been claimed by any of the militias operating in the region

(including Baitullah Mehsud's Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan - TTP). Eighty of the victims were rescued on the evening of their capture after a brief battle with security forces. The other forty were released June 4 after furious activity by the Pakistani government, which included a government threat of military action against the Jani Khel and Bakka Khel, the convening of a jirga in Waziri areas of SWA, and a reported approach to NWA warlord Hafiz Gul Bahadur by members of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F). The rationale behind both the kidnapping and the release, however, has never been convincingly explained, and residents of Bannu and the Waziristans who have discussed the subject with the Consulate uniformly regard the event as a "drama" staged by the Pakistani government to justify military action in F.R. Bannu.

#### TTP Responds in SWA

14. (C/NF) The military operation in F.R. Bannu is provoking already-ongoing sporadic fighting between militants and the Pakistani military 40 miles to the south in F.R. Tank and SWA. Over the night of June 10-11, the Pakistani army reported that several hundred militants attacked three of its posts in and near Mehsud areas, at Jandola (F.R. Tank), Siplatoi (SWA), and Chakmalai (SWA). The latter of these posts has come under serious attack multiple times since its establishment well inside Mehsud areas three weeks ago.

#### IDPs Raise Fears in Bannu, D.I. Khan

15. (C) Residents of the areas of F.R. Bannu affected by the conflict have begun to flee the area. Most are moving east toward Bannu district, which former Bannu district coordinating officer (DCO) Javed Marwat told Consulate has raised fears in

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the district government of large-scale militant infiltration. The government has responded by forbidding Bannu district residents from hosting IDPs from F.R. Bannu in their homes. Those defying this order face the potential penalty of having their homes destroyed if they are found to shelter a militant, even if unwittingly. This penalty, long the rule under the collective-punishment system present in the tribal agencies and frontier regions, had not been previously employed on a large scale outside of those areas.

16. (C) The government has instead designated a location in a rural area of Bannu district at which all IDPs from F.R. Bannu must stay if they wish to remain in the district. According to Consulate contacts on the ground, however, no preparations have been made to develop infrastructure for the establishment of an IDP camp in the area. Most IDPs coming into Bannu district, therefore, have been continuing on in the direction of either Peshawar or Dera Ismail Khan.

17. (SBU) In Dera Ismail Khan, however, sectarian violence has already been heating up over the past two weeks, and the outflow of IDPs from F.R. Bannu has raised fears of further tensions. The most recent round of tit-for-tat killings, set off a month ago by the killing of a mohajir by a Shi'a in a quarrel, has pitted Shi'as against primarily mohajir Sunni merchants in the city's bazaars. (Note: "Mohajir" is generally understood to mean Muslims who re-settled in Pakistan from India around 1947.) Scores have been killed and injured in dozens of attacks over the past two weeks, including 21 wounded in two grenade attacks, a shooting, and an IED attack on June 11 and twelve killed and over forty (primarily Sunni) wounded in an IED attack on a crowded market on June 14.

18. (C) According to (Sunni) D.I. Khan Provincial Assembly member Latif Alizai, the violence has been supplemented by actions attributed to indigenous Sunnis affiliated with Sipah-i-Sahaba, which maintains strong links to the TTP, rather than the mohajir community. The recent arrest of a kidnapping ring, all of whose members were Mehsuds, has exacerbated the situation. Alizai

says the district government seems to be backing off its earlier insistence that no IDP camps be established within the district, but no arrangements have been made to designate camp sites in the district as yet.

¶9. (C) According to tribal elder and journalist Selab Mehsud, large numbers of people are living in informal camps, particularly in Tank. Given the issues in the settled districts to their east, however, some families in the Waziristans appear to be making arrangements to go in other directions. A few are even crossing the border into Afghanistan; Mehsud noted that he was in contact with one of approximately 25 families among the Ahmedzai Waziris who had already emigrated there, and he said that others are planning to do so.

Comment

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¶10. (C) The Pakistani military action in F.R. Bannu, while apparently limited in scope, has again turned the spotlight toward the Waziristans, where NWFP Governor Ghani on June 14 announced that a "full-scale attack" was imminent, although the army spokesman declined to confirm the army's intent. The escalation in TTP attacks on Pakistani military emplacements in the area, like their attacks further afield in Peshawar and elsewhere, seem to be in recognition of the seriousness of the military's intent to destroy the organization. The reaction of authorities in Bannu district to the F.R. Bannu campaign, combined with statements we have previously heard from NWFP authorities (ref B), indicate that the government will view IDPs from a Waziristan campaign as more of a security issue than a humanitarian issue, and it will take measures accordingly.

TRACY